



# ***News Release***

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY  
John L. Clayton, Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **DES WELCOMES NATIONAL CHILD WELFARE ACCOUNTABILITY EFFORTS**

(PHOENIX, August 10, 2000) – The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recently issued a report that compiles state and national data on the welfare of children which will be used to hold states accountable for services to at-risk children. In response, The Department of Economic Security Director John L. Clayton stated, “We strongly believe in measuring child welfare outcomes as a tool to improve services for children in state care.” He added that Arizona has been in the forefront of this effort by providing semi-annual reports to the legislature on the status of child welfare as it pertains to children in state care. These child welfare reports were started in 1995 and enhanced in 1999.

Although not all of Arizona’s data was available for inclusion in the national report for 1998 due to the fact that the statewide child welfare automated system was in the process of being implemented, future reports will include complete data for the state.

The HHS report covers data collected in 1997 and 1998 concerning the number of children that were reported to Child Protective Services, the number of children in foster care and the number of children adopted and waiting to be adopted. The report finds that the number of children

adopted nationally in 1998 was 36,000, an increase from 28,000 in 1996. In Arizona the number of children adopted in state fiscal year 2000 was 857 compared to approximately 400 in 1998. The report confirms that the incidence of child abuse and neglect has declined in recent years. This also holds true in Arizona. There were 38,229 child abuse reports received in FY 97 compared to 32,406 in 1999.

Mr. Clayton noted that there are many improvements currently under way in the state that are having a positive impact on the child welfare system that were not reflected in this HHS report but should be included in subsequent reports, among them:

- Due to the Family Builders Program, implemented in 1998, Child Protective Services and its community partners are responding to 100% of all reports of abuse and neglect received at the Child Abuse Hotline.
- The Model Court legislation which was implemented statewide in 1999 has resulted in having children and families involved in abuse and neglect situations moving more quickly through the court system. This expedites the dependency and permanency planning process for children.
- DES now has a full-time foster and adoptive parent recruitment coordinator working with community coalitions statewide to expand successful recruitment programs. These efforts include using regional and national adoption exchanges, using the Internet to promote the availability of children free for adoption, promoting active media campaigns and the use of a toll free number to increase awareness of children in need of adoptive homes.